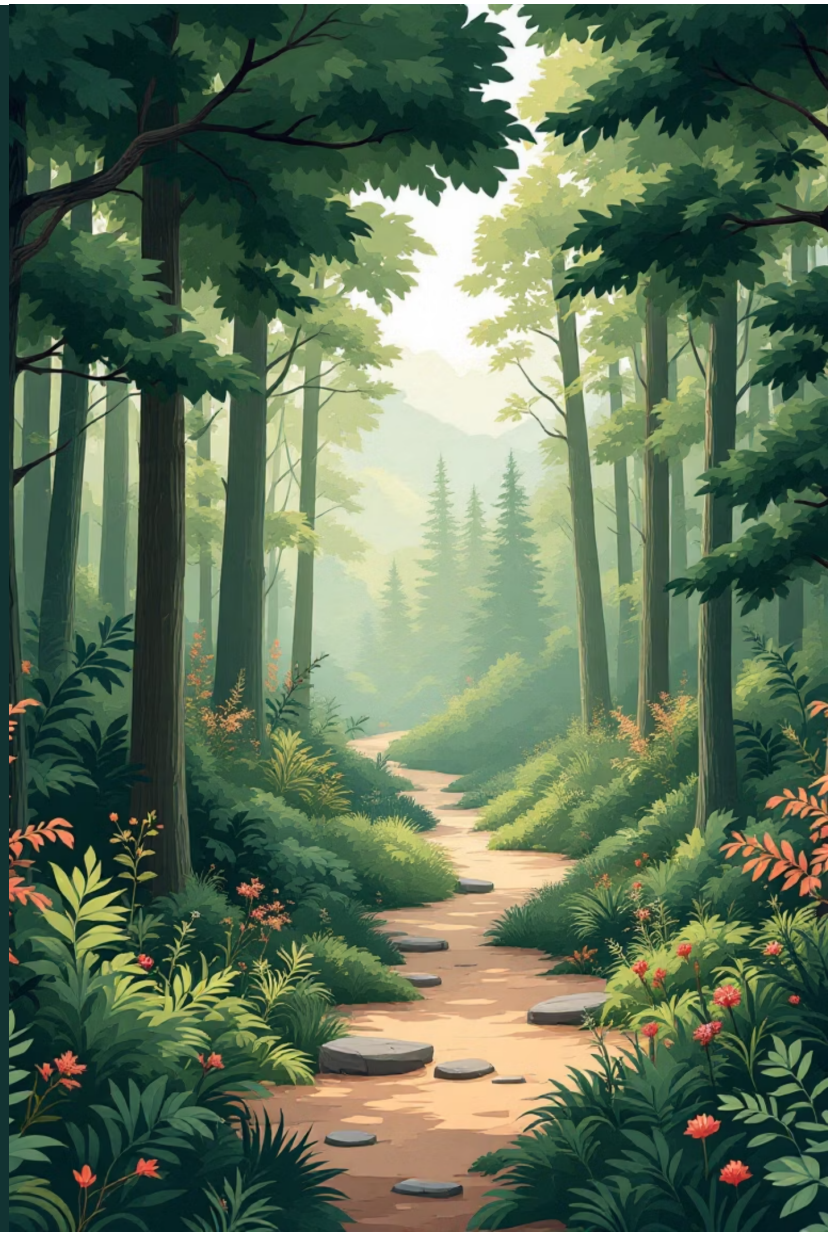
Combating Invasive Plant Species in Forests and Urban Landscapes

Strategies for the REU Region

(Europe and Central Asia)

ECOPATROL SERVICE

OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA



A Growing Regional Threat



Invasive plant species are no longer isolated problems—they have evolved into **regional threats** with far-reaching consequences across the REU region comprising Europe and Central Asia.

These alien species actively disrupt native ecosystems, challenge both forestry and agricultural systems, and significantly undermine the resilience of our critical green infrastructure.

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Armenia's Intensifying Challenge

Origin Problem

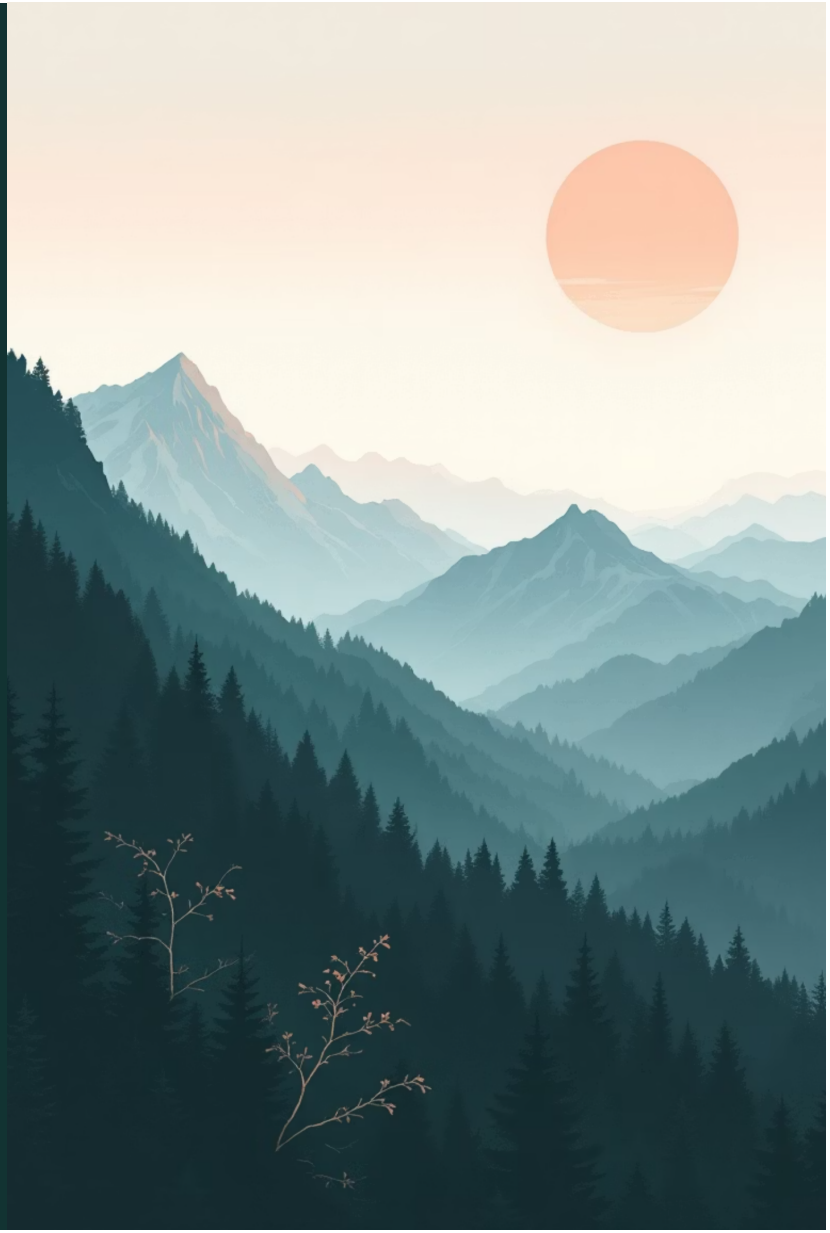
Many invasive plants were initially introduced for ornamental or agricultural purposes, appearing harmless at first.

Spread Pattern

These species have since established themselves aggressively in natural areas, including protected forests and urban green zones.

Current Impact

They now pose serious threats to biodiversity and ecosystem health across Armenia's diverse landscapes.



Forests Under Siege



Structural Disruption

Invasive plants fundamentally alter forest structure and composition, displacing native species populations.



Resource Competition

They aggressively compete for essential water and soil nutrients, weakening native vegetation.



Disease Vectors

Some facilitate the spread of pests and diseases, creating cascading ecological problems.



Fire Risk

In mountainous and semi-arid regions, they contribute to ecosystem degradation and increased wildfire vulnerability.

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Urban Landscapes: Hidden Vulnerability

Where the Problem Thrives

- Green belts and urban parks lacking regular monitoring
- Unmanaged peripheral zones and abandoned lots
- Ornamental plantings that escape cultivation
- Transportation corridors and construction sites

The Consequences

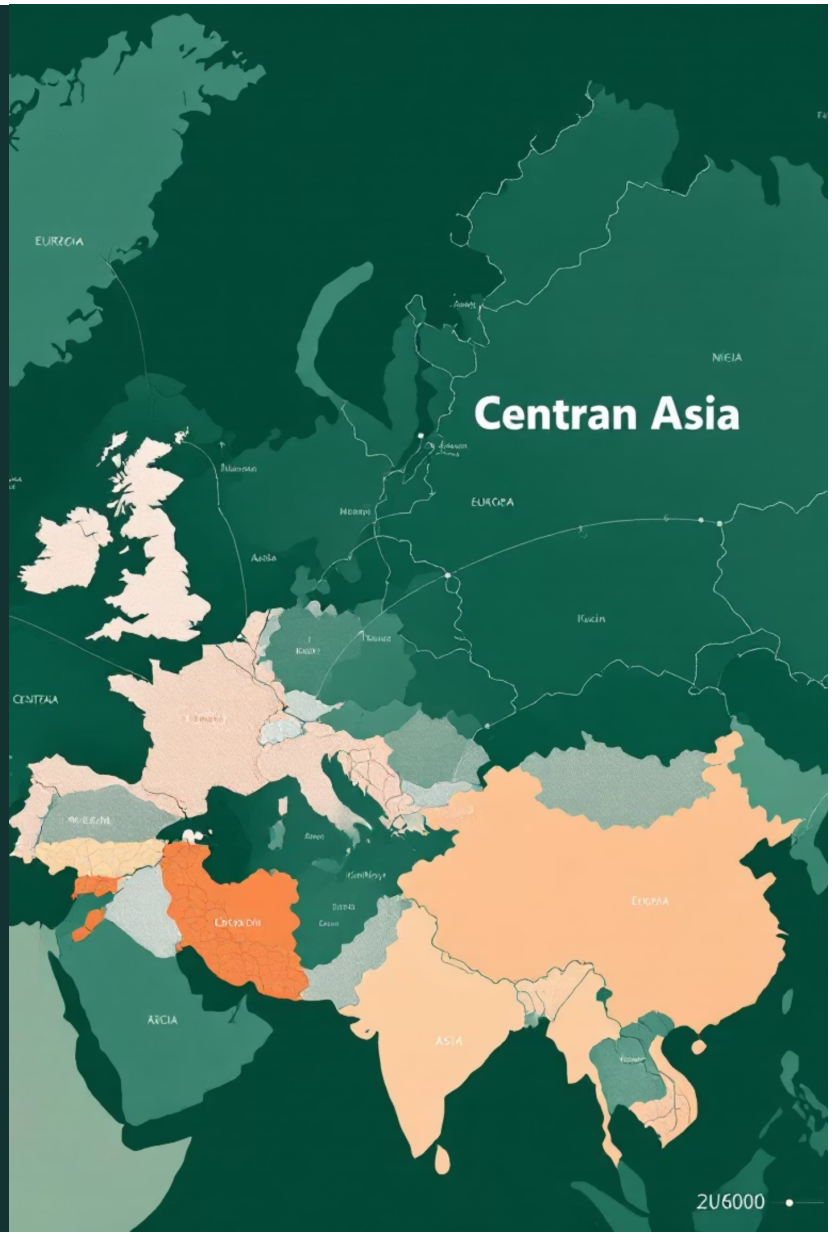
Without proper monitoring and public awareness, invasive species spread unnoticed through cities, damaging local biodiversity and creating unexpected financial burdens for municipalities struggling with increased maintenance costs.



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Invasive species don't recognize borders

This is fundamentally a **transboundary challenge** requiring transboundary solutions. The REU region must unite in adopting coordinated, science-based strategies that transcend national boundaries and political divisions.



Five Strategic Pillars for Action

01

Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR)

Invest in national and regional monitoring systems. Empower local communities to participate actively in early identification and reporting of invasive plants.

02

Regional Collaboration and Data Sharing

Establish cross-border information exchange, shared databases, and joint training initiatives to understand and manage plant invasions effectively.

03

Policy Integration and Urban Planning

Cities must integrate invasive species prevention into green space development plans, restricting the use of high-risk non-native species in landscaping projects.

04

Education and Public Engagement

Launch awareness campaigns that transform citizens into prevention partners. Engage schools, local governments, and civil society organizations.

05

Scientific Research and Innovation

Collaborate with research institutions to develop adaptive, cost-effective management methods and assess long-term ecological risks.

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The Path Forward

> "We must act decisively and collaboratively. The health of our forests, the vitality of our cities, and the resilience of our ecosystems depend on our collective commitment to preventing and managing invasive plant species."

Regional Unity

Coordinated action across borders

Science-Based Solutions

Evidence-driven strategies

Urgent Action

The time to act is now





Armenia's Strategic Response to Invasive Species

Strengthening Regional Environmental Cooperation Through the Ecopatrol Service

A comprehensive institutional approach to protecting biodiversity and building climate-resilient ecosystems in the REU region

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Our Shared Environmental Challenge

Armenia remains firmly committed to regional cooperation and stands ready to contribute to developing a unified strategy for the REU region. We recognize that combating invasive plant species transcends national borders—it is both an ecological responsibility and a critical pathway toward creating resilient, climate-adaptive, and biodiverse landscapes.



Our region confronts complex environmental challenges, with invasive species proliferation emerging as a particularly urgent concern requiring coordinated, strategic response.

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Introducing the Ecopatrol Service

Central to our reform initiative is the establishment of the **Ecopatrol Service** - a specialized agency dedicated to preventing threats to nature and biodiversity, particularly the spread of invasive species.



Operational since January 1, 2024, this unique entity functions under the Ministry of Environment with enhanced capabilities for identifying, analyzing, and delivering rapid, effective solutions to environmental challenges.

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Comprehensive Institutional Reform

In response to escalating environmental threats, the Republic of Armenia has undertaken deep and comprehensive institutional reforms across the environmental sector. These reforms represent a fundamental shift in how we approach nature conservation, biodiversity protection, and invasive species management.

Structural Transformation

Complete reorganization of environmental governance frameworks

Modernized Systems

Integration of advanced monitoring and response technologies

Enhanced Protection

Strengthened mechanisms for environmental monitoring and enforcement

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Core Mandate and Objectives

1

Conservation of Natural Assets

Preservation of state forests, forest lands, and specially protected areas of nature (SPANs) through active monitoring and intervention

2

Fire Safety Management

Implementation of comprehensive fire prevention, detection, and rapid response protocols across protected territories

3

Violation Detection & Enforcement

Identification, prevention, and legal deterrence of environmental violations through enhanced investigative authority

These objectives are achieved through **24/7 surveillance**, coordinated operations, and deployment of modern technical equipment—representing a fundamental shift from previous conservation approaches.

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Transformative Structural Changes





Institutional Redesign

The former "Forestry Committee" was restructured and renamed as the Ecopatrol Service, establishing a specialized conservation entity

Unified Structure

Reduction of fragmented staff across "Hayantar" SNCO and SPAN-managing entities to create a single, coordinated conservation framework

Ministerial Integration

Transfer of forest conservation functions directly to the Ministry of Environment, enabling specialized development and oversight

Enhanced Authority

Officers authorized to draft administrative protocols, initiate proceedings, petition for criminal prosecution, and calculate environmental damages

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New Capabilities Replace Outdated Systems

Previous System

- Weak technical equipment
- Limited officer powers
- Five-day, eight-hour work schedule
- Fragmented organizational structure
- Reactive rather than preventive approach

Ecopatrol Service Model

- Advanced technical special equipment
- Comprehensive legal authority
- Continuous 24/7 operations
- Unified, coordinated structure
- Proactive threat detection and prevention

This transformation represents a complete paradigm shift in how Armenia approaches environmental protection—moving from fragmented, under-resourced efforts to a professional, technology-enabled, and legally empowered conservation force.

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Professional Recruitment and Social Guarantees

1,176

Total Service Posts

Recruited through competitive process

100%

Higher Education Required

Plus relevant field experience

3

Competition Stages

Physical fitness, written testing, interview

Commitment to Gender Equality: We especially emphasize the essential role of women in the decision-making process and ensure equal involvement at all levels of the Ecopatrol Service.

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Women Leading the Charge in Environmental Protection



Field Inspectors

Women lead critical environmental assessments, conducting thorough investigations and ensuring compliance with conservation protocols.

Analysts

Women analyze environmental data, identify trends, and develop evidence-based strategies for policy implementation.

Decision-Makers

Women in leadership roles shape institutional priorities, bringing strategic vision to environmental governance.

Rangers

Protecting our natural resources on the frontlines, women rangers patrol protected areas and engage with local communities.



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Rigorous Training and Professionalization

The Ecopatrol Service has established comprehensive mandatory training programs—a crucial departure from previous conservation models that ensures every officer possesses the specialized knowledge required for effective environmental protection.



All Service Officers

5-Day Intensive Course

- Theoretical and practical training
- Salary maintained during training
- Authorization granted only upon certification



Junior Officer Candidates

15-Day Comprehensive Program

Stage I: Ecology, zoology, botany, forestry, environmental law

Stage II: Emergency and firefighting preparedness

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Attractive Social Package and Compensation

In contrast to employees of previous environmental control organizations, Ecopatrol officers serve as public servants with substantial social guarantees. Armenia's legislation provides a highly competitive salary structure designed to attract and retain top environmental protection talent.

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Competitive Salary Structure

Ecopatrol officers receive compensation that significantly exceeds national averages, reflecting the critical importance of environmental protection work

Position	Gross Monthly Salary (AMD)	Approx. EUR Equivalent	% of National Average Salary
Regional Department Head	577,408	€1,299	209.47%
Deputy Regional Head / Section Head	475,072	€1,068	172.35%
Chief Eco Patrol Officer	391,040	€880	141.86%
Senior Eco Patrol Officer	322,816	€726	117.11%
Shift Inspector	221,312	€498	80.29%
Junior Eco Patrol Officer	139,776	€314	50.71%

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Comprehensive Benefits Package



Performance Bonuses

Officers receive opportunities for bonuses twice annually based on comprehensive performance evaluations and achievement of environmental protection goals.



State Social Package

Full access to state-provided social benefits, including healthcare coverage, pension contributions, and family support programs.



Vacation Payment

One-time vacation payment provided upon taking leave, ensuring officers can fully enjoy their time off without financial stress.

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Exceptional Risk Protection

Recognizing the inherent dangers of environmental enforcement work, officers receive substantial financial protection guarantees.

Death in the Line of Duty

One million AMD (approximately €2,250) in financial aid provided to families of officers who make the ultimate sacrifice protecting Armenia's environment.

Disability Benefits

Financial assistance calculated as a percentage of the death benefit: **50% for profound**, **40% for severe**, and **30% for moderate** functional limitations resulting from line-of-duty injuries.

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Digitalization and Technical Readiness

The Service's effectiveness is built upon modern technology and accountability systems that enable real-time enforcement and transparent operations.



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Advanced Tablet Software System

Real-Time Field Capabilities

Officers carry tablets with specialized software that transforms enforcement capabilities:

- Instantly identify offenders, vehicles, and protected species
- Geolocate and document offense sites with precision
- Access official maps, borders, and zoning plans for protected areas
- Input and electronically transmit violation protocol data in real-time

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Transparency Through Technology

Body-Worn Cameras

All officers equipped with cameras ensuring complete transparency and quality control during field operations.

1

Automatic Upload

2

Video footage automatically uploaded to Operational Management Center and Internal Security Department at shift end.

Accountability System

3

Complete documentation creates accountability for both officers and violators, building public trust.

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Comprehensive Equipment Arsenal

Operational Vehicles

Fleet equipped with firefighting gear for rapid response to environmental emergencies and illegal activities.

Motorboats & Marine Equipment

Watercraft for ecopatrol of Lake Sevan and other water bodies, with GPS tracking and electronic monitoring systems.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

UAVs provide aerial surveillance of remote areas and large protected territories.

Smart Sensor Network

Sound and motion sensors with advanced radio communication systems for 24/7 monitoring.

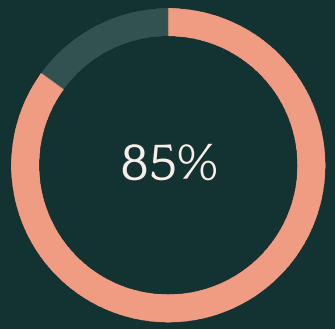
Lake Sevan Initiative: A specialized system includes checkpoints with electronic scales, GPS devices on all watercraft, QR code tracking, and a comprehensive database to control commercial fishing of fish and crabs.



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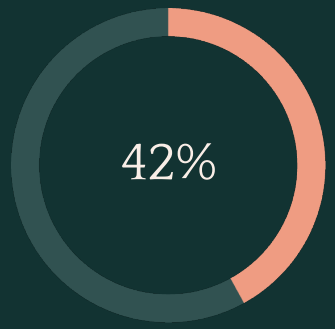
Proven Results During Transition

Even during the transition phase from the previous system, our statistics demonstrate compelling effectiveness.



Increase in Violation Detection

Significant rise indicating effective performance of enforcement functions



Decrease in Environmental Crimes

Direct result of comprehensive policy and proper control mechanisms



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Official Launch and Future Expansion

This proven effectiveness enabled the official launch of our Syunik Regional Department on April 11, 2024—the first of our territorial divisions to reach full operational status.

> As technical and professional capabilities continue to expand across Armenia, we are confident that the entire network of regional departments will be fully operational by the close of 2026.

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Armenia's Vision for COP17

Building a Sustainable Future Together

Our Commitment

Armenia's approach to hosting COP17 on Biodiversity reflects a fundamental conviction: true progress emerges when sustainability and inclusiveness advance hand in hand. This isn't just about environmental protection—it's about ensuring every voice shapes our collective future.

A Landmark Moment

Next year, Armenia will unite countries around the shared mission of implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This historic gathering represents more than policy discussions—it's about transforming global commitments into concrete action.



Strengthen Cooperation

Foster partnerships across borders and sectors to amplify collective impact on biodiversity conservation



Exchange Experience

Share practical solutions and proven strategies that have succeeded in diverse regional contexts



Translate to Action

Transform international frameworks into tangible national and regional initiatives with measurable outcomes



Priority Focus: Invasive Alien Species

The threat of invasive alien species looms large across our region, disrupting ecosystems and endangering native biodiversity. At COP17, this critical challenge will receive the focused attention it demands, with practical strategies for prevention, control, and restoration taking center stage in our collaborative dialogue.



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THANK YOU

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